

Coors Boycott Alive & Well

Eight or nine years ago, a date of insignificance to us today, a boycott of the Adolph Coors Brewing Co., the third largest industry in Colorado (behind agriculture and tourism), was initiated originally by Chicanos concerned with discriminatory hiring practices at the Golden plant.

Since these first charges were leveled and confirmed by company statistics (in 1966 four percent of its employees were minority-group members; in April, 1975, 10 percent of its employees were minority-group members--the Denver metropolitan area is approximately 20 percent minority group population--13 percent Chicano, seven percent black), other issues concerning the practices of the Coors family sole owners of the multimillion dollar empire whose interests include beer, dog food, cans, bottles, ceramics, warheads, trucking coal and cattle, have been raised. The practices are not only illegal in the judicial sense, but are perverted, warped, and detrimental in a human sense.

Such activities include:

--complicity, as during the United Farm Workers' lettuce and grape strikes during the late 1960's when Coors trucks were used to haul lettuce and grapes picked by strike breakers.

--being convicted by the Federal Trade Commission for wholesale and retail price fixing, and of using illegal methods to get draft beer accounts.

--being convicted of income tax evasion based on a July, 1975, ruling by the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals stating that Coors owed \$5.1 million in back taxes. This decision came after Coors was found guilty of understating income in 1965 and 1966.

--being found guilty of dumping waste-products illegally in gulches near the Golden plant.

--attempting to initiate weather modification (cloud seeding) in the San Luis Valley to improve barley crop yields (at the expense of the potato crop--rain crop in the valley--which would rot with late season rains).

--providing the Denver police department with two helicopters and bullet-proof vests (to be used against the people of Denver).

--being found guilty of putting taped messages, without authorization, under the name of the Heritage Foundation, on United Airlines flights. The messages advocated support for Ronald Reagan and George Wallace in their presidential campaigns.

--creating a television network, Television News Inc. (TVI), because of the 'liberal' bias of the three prominent networks (ABC, NBC, and CBS), with strong conservative policies. The policies are so dictatorial, in fact, that in its first year of operation, seven of nine TVN reporters quit (for example, Coors refused to allow news reports about Dr. Martin Luther King to be aired on TVN).

--supporting the John Birch Society.

--allowing Klu Klux Klan meetings to be held at the Golden brewery.

--engaging in union-busting practices using strike breakers and non-union labor (in November, 1968, 17 labor unions went out on strike against Coors, including Bricklayers No. 1, Carpenters District Council, Electricians No. 6, Ironworkers No. 24, Painters No. 79, Pipefitters No. 208, Plumbers No. 3, and Roofers No. 41. They are still on strike).



The list is virtually endless, as is the insensitivity, the callousness, racism, and injustices victimizing Chicanos and other poor people as a result of Coors practices. "Coors is so engrossed in this monstrosity that he owns, that he thinks he's way above everybody else. He has complete disregard for people," said Allan Baird of Teamsters Local 898 of San Francisco, California.

Indications are that the Coors boycott, while just beginning, has been effective. In California during 1975, for example, Coors sales dropped 31 percent in February, eight percent in March, and 10 percent in April compared to the same months the previous year. For the year, 656,690 less barrels of beer were sold by Coors in California compared to 1974.

Last year, Coors dropped from fourth to fifth place in sales among United States breweries. Joseph Coors, president of the company, was quoted in the New York Times as saying that by 1980, only four breweries would be operating in this country and he intended to be one of them.

While Joseph Coors will not admit to the success of the boycott based on sales figures, he is resorting to other tactics which clearly reveal the truth that the boycott is hurting his profits; his real concern. These tactics include the recent awarding of five distributorships in Texas to "principles or co-principles" who are Chicano; "increased support" for college and technical school scholarships for Mexican-American students in Colorado; and the hiring of Joe Benites, past national president of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) to a position with the Coors public relations department.

As a result of these recent developments, some Spanish speaking national organizations, including LULAC, have applauded these efforts, hailing Coors as their saviour, and are calling off the boycott. It is noted that Benites was president of LULAC when the organization called for an end of the boycott. In a recent interview, when asked about some of Coors practices (concerning cloud seeding, dumping wastes, tax evasion, police equipment, war supplies, and racism) Benites pleaded complete ignorance. When

later probed about the LULAC decision, he admitted that his organization had not conducted a very thorough investigation.

It is only too obvious that selfish interests, a few monetary gains, and Spanish speaking national organizations do not represent the people. Justice, equality, and humanity are not purchased with token gestures. The struggle for human dignity and respect will never be bought with monetary concessions.

There is nothing wrong with Chicanos, who have systematically been denied equal access to business opportunities, to pursue business ventures; there is nothing wrong with Chicanos seeking scholarships to pursue higher education; nor is there anything wrong with Chicanos seeking better job opportunities.

But when such opportunities serve only as tactics to pacify people and to confuse issues; when such tactics serve only certain selfish interests; and ultimately, when such tactics serve only to promote and perpetuate existing racism, discrimination, exploitation, and oppression at the expense of the people, as are these tactics, they mustn't be condoned but rather exposed and condemned.

Any form of acceptance of any of these tokenisms is nothing more than prostitution. We do not liberate ourselves, solve any of our problems, nor eliminate any injustices by selling ourselves out for infected dollars.

Money and profits, the motives behind the practices of the Coors operation have never served humane interests. Instead, they have only inflicted pain, misery, and hatred. Only through our actions can we put a stop to this dehumanization.

Too often we're led to believe that we as individuals, are trapped in a web of isolation, powerless to create any real change. But the efforts of those boycotting Coors prove to the contrary that there is strength in struggle and unity.

Through concerned efforts such as this boycott, we can take a stand, make it known, and be effective. Any individual dedicated to the principles of fairness, equality, and justice will make the statement through his/her actions.

Take a stand for nuestra Raza.
Educate others. BOYCOTT COORS!